As we read in verse 2:190, Allah commands Muslims not to go to extremes by saying, **"Do not transgress the limits."**
A situation of war is no excuse to go beyond boundaries. Islam teaches the avoidance of blind retaliation.

"And let not the hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to righteousness."
Qur'an 5:8

Terrorism in perspective

The problem with putting terrorism into perspective is that there is no agreed-upon definition of what constitutes "terrorism". Also, terrorism takes many forms, as the following examples illustrate.

Robert Fisk, from *The Independent*, writes: *"Israel and Israel's militia allies (on 16 September 1982) started their three-day orgy of rape, knifing and murder in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila that cost 1,800 lives. It followed an Israeli invasion of Lebanon designed to drive the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) out of the country and given the green light [by the United States] which cost the lives of 17,500 Lebanese and Palestinians, almost all of them civilians."*

According to *Professor Noam Chomsky*, *"It's uncontroversial that the United States is a leading terrorist state. In fact, it's the only state that was condemned for international terrorism by the highest bodies: the International Court of Justice in 1986."*

Similarly, *"The horrific massacre of 8,000 Muslims - some unarmed - at Srebrenica in 1995 never led to a stream of pieces about the violence and repressive tendencies of Christianity."* - *William Dalrymple, The Independent UK.*

"The carnage wrought by Western, ostensibly Christian, leaders over the last six decades - including a world war and a cold war, a Holocaust, two atomic bombs, repression of wars of independence, the fuelling of proxy wars, nuclear brinksmanship, and the support of dictators and state and non-state terrorists – makes it spurious to view Islam as a more inherently violent religion or civilisation." - *Rama Mani (Geneva Centre for Security Policy)*

There are many other examples of both Jewish and Christian terrorism, however, we must never generalise and call all Christians and Jews terrorists. Similarly, we should not put all Muslims on trial but only those that committed the crime should be judged.

Islam denounces terrorism

The act of inciting terror in the hearts of defenceless civilians, the wholesale destruction of buildings and properties, the bombing and maiming of innocent men, women and children are all forbidden and detestable acts according to Islam and the Muslims. This is regardless of any type of terrorism, including western state-sponsored terrorism which has killed, injured and displaced infinitely more people than all other types of terrorism.

If an individual Muslim were to commit an act of terrorism, this person would be guilty of violating the laws of the very religion they claim to follow - Islam. Would it be fair to condemn all Muslims as a result, when the religion itself is against such acts? Muslims follow a religion of submission to God, peace, mercy, and forgiveness. The vast majority have nothing to do with the violent events some – notably the media - have associated with Muslims. Islam is not a religion of extremism.

"Allah does not forbid you from showing kindness and dealing justly with those who have not fought you about religion and have not driven you out of your homes. Allah loves those who are just."

Qur'an 60:8

ISLAM IS **NOT** A RELIGION OF EXTREMISM

" *...Whosoever kills an innocent human being, it shall be as if he has killed all mankind, and whosoever saves the life of one, it shall be as if he had saved the life of all mankind...*
Quran 5:32 **"**

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Islam...
an **extreme** religion?

"Islamic terrorists!" "Muslim fundamentalists!" "Extremists!" "Radical Islamists!" These are just some labels that have been wrongly applied to Muslims and certain Muslim groups in recent years.

The media's portrayal of Islam often misleads those whose knowledge of the religion is limited, into making negative assumptions about this very peaceful and tolerant way of life.

Peter Manning, a journalist of over 30 years, states in his book, *"Us and Them"*:

"My experience tells me there's a vast gulf between the realities of the daily lives of Arab and Muslim Australians and how they are represented in our [Australian] media.

In more than 60 percent of cases [from the coverage of 2 major newspapers], the words 'violent', 'death', 'attack', 'kill', 'suicide' or 'gunmen' were in close proximity to the words 'Arab', 'Palestinian', 'Muslim' or 'Islam'."

Is it then, any wonder that most people associate Islam with terrorism?

The problem of ignorance is highlighted by a survey which revealed that more than one in three Australians admit to knowing nothing about Islam and its followers.

"Those with the least knowledge and personal contact with Muslims were the most likely to feel threatened by Islam," said Dr Dunn, who was commissioned by the Australia-Indonesia Institute to carry out the study.

The prevalence of media bias and ignorance regarding Islam can be countered by understanding Islam *through its proper teachings*. That means referring to the Qur'an (which Muslims believe to be the word of God) and the authentic sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Through the proper understanding of these teachings, one will discover Islam to be completely against any form of extremism.

How the **Quran** can be **misunderstood**

When reading through the Qur'an or the sayings of the Prophet (peace be upon him), one must understand the context in which the wording applies.

The following verse of the Qur'an is a favourite amongst those seeking to mislead people about Islam:

"And kill them wherever you find them, and expel them from where they expelled you, as persecuting people to sway them from God's Religion is worse than killing. But do not fight them at the Sacred Mosque, unless they fight you there. But if they do fight you, then slay them; This is the recompense of the disbelievers."
Qur'an 2:191

On occasions, this verse has been dangerously trimmed down to the following:

"And kill them wherever you find them..." - *Qur'an 2:191*

The obvious question is, "Kill who?". To answer this question, one should read the verses before and after verse 2:191.

"And fight in the way of Allah those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits, surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits." - *Qur'an 2:190*

The above verse mentions fighting as a means of self defence (i.e. with those who fight you). The verse after 2:191 is:

"But if they cease, Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful."
Qur'an 2:192

These verses were revealed at a time when the Muslims had been expelled from their homes on account of their faith. They endured more than ten years of persecution and eventually had to flee to a safe land.

The above verses were referring to the Arab pagans of Mecca during the Prophet's time, who oppressed the Muslims and planned to attack them where the Muslims sought refuge.

Hence, the above verse can only be applied in such circumstances.

This example demonstrates that verses in the Qur'an should be understood in their proper context since verses were revealed in stages in relation to particular situations, over a period of 23 years. It is also important to note that the Qur'an was revealed in Arabic. Therefore, translations into different languages may be misleading and/or inaccurate.

Permissible **fighting/warfare**

There can be no doubt that Muslims (like anybody else) have a legitimate right to fight against aggression or when oppressed.

Islam teaches that warfare is permitted in order to preserve the wellbeing of the community or to prevent oppression from spreading - this may be in the context of defensive or offensive warfare depending on the particular situation. Islam, just like any 'way of life' that wants to ensure its survival, has the right to defend itself when war is declared against it. In the Qur'an we read:

"To those against whom war is made, permission is given to fight, because they are wronged."
Qur'an 22:39

However, when the enemy ceases its hostility, Muslims are commanded to cease fighting.

"And if they incline to peace, then incline to it and trust in God; surely He is the All-Hearer, the All-Knower."
Qur'an 8:61

Abu Bakr (may God be pleased with him), Prophet Mohammad's closest friend and first successor, spoke of the Islamic approach to war by highlighting the following:

In the battlefield, one should not:

- commit treachery
- mutilate the dead
- deviate from the right path
- kill a woman, child or aged man
- harm or burn trees, especially the fruitful
- slay the enemy's flock, except for food
- harm those who devote their life to worship